

**Sherry Friedlander, President and Founder**  
*A Child Is Missing*

**“Testimony in Support of H.R. 5464, the A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center Act”**

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

Thank you Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gohmert, Members of the Subcommittee, and staff for allowing me to testify today in support of H.R. 5464, the “A Child Is Missing Alert and Recovery Center Act.” Thank you Congressman Klein for introducing the bill.

One in every 42 children in the United States goes missing every year. That is one child every 40 seconds. Almost 10 children will go missing in the brief time I am addressing you today.

These daunting statistics are what motivated me to start the *A Child Is Missing* program in 1997. I did not have a missing child, just an idea to use technology to help law enforcement find missing children. I started very small by helping a couple of law enforcement agencies in South Florida. With the help of friends and supporters, I was able to expand the program to other parts of Florida, and then to Rhode Island, Alaska, Ohio and Georgia. Now we are available to law enforcement agencies in all 50 states!

*A Child Is Missing* is a not-for-profit organization that assists law enforcement agencies in the first hours a child is reported missing. The program is also used to help find elderly adults. Almost 30 percent of our cases involve the elderly. This is a free service, activated only by law enforcement that fills the gaps of the *Amber Alert* program.

Here is how *A Child Is Missing* works. A child goes missing. A frantic parent or guardian calls 9-11. Law enforcement responds and verifies if in fact the child is missing. If the child is missing, the law enforcement officer calls us. Our Recovery Specialist quickly

gathers essential information from police such as the description of the child and where the child was last seen. Our Recovery Specialist then uses our satellite-mapping system, a system similar to *Google Earth* but more detailed, to define the search area. Once the search area is defined, the Recovery Specialist records a telephone message on behalf of the law enforcement agency and then pushes a button. Our phone system then auto dials every listed phone number in the search area. Citizens are told to report any information they may have about the missing child or elderly adult to the police.

The speed in which this takes place is remarkable. It takes *A Child Is Missing* only 8-12 minutes to determine the search area, identify the phone numbers, record the message, and make the calls. Due to our 181 T1 lines, our calls can be made at the rate of 1,000 calls every 60 seconds.

*A Child Is Missing's* satellite-mapping system is very sophisticated and we have a database of more than 80 million phone numbers. Citizens appreciate the calls because it is an official call from the law enforcement agency. Our calls have a 98 percent listen rate.

We also know no jurisdictional boundaries. In fact, we have successfully worked cases that have involved multiple states and a host of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. We also work with the U.S. Marshal Service and the FBI.

To date, *A Child Is Missing* has worked approximately 9,000 cases and has launched more than 16 million alert calls. In 2007 alone, we worked almost 1,500 cases. From January 2007 through April 2007, *A Child Is Missing* worked on 412 cases. A year later, we have handled more than 900 cases!

Law enforcement has credited us with 340 safe assisted recoveries. That is 340 lives we have saved. 340 families we have touched. We could take credit for more safe recoveries;

however, I decided long ago to only list recoveries where law enforcement – in writing – gives us credit for the recovery.

We do this everyday. Our Recovery Specialists are available 24/7, 365 and are extremely experienced in the field of missing children and elderly adults. We bring this experience to the assistance of law enforcement. Fifty-two percent of the nation’s law enforcement agencies have 25 or fewer sworn personnel. Without *A Child Is Missing*, these agencies would not have a place to turn for help.

This vital service is free to all law enforcement. Though available to all 16,000-law enforcement agencies throughout the nation, only 2,200 currently use the program. Therein lies a critical need for H.R. 5464.

H.R. 5464 will increase the number of agencies using the program thereby saving more lives. This legislation will also enable us to ensure we stay on the cutting edge of technology and will help address the increasing volume of cases. Very large metropolitan areas such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles pose unique challenges for law enforcement and us. Doing nothing in these areas is not an option, but H.R. 5464 will allow us to work with these agencies to address their special needs.

Our statistics clearly show that the increased success of *A Child Is Missing* is due to an increase in usage by law enforcement. One third of our safe assisted recoveries have come in just last year due to our having maximized agency participation. With H.R. 5464, I know we can do even more.

Thank you Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Gohmert for the opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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